



4 (of 4)
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ALIENSTM

EARTH WAR



JOHN
BOLTON
1990



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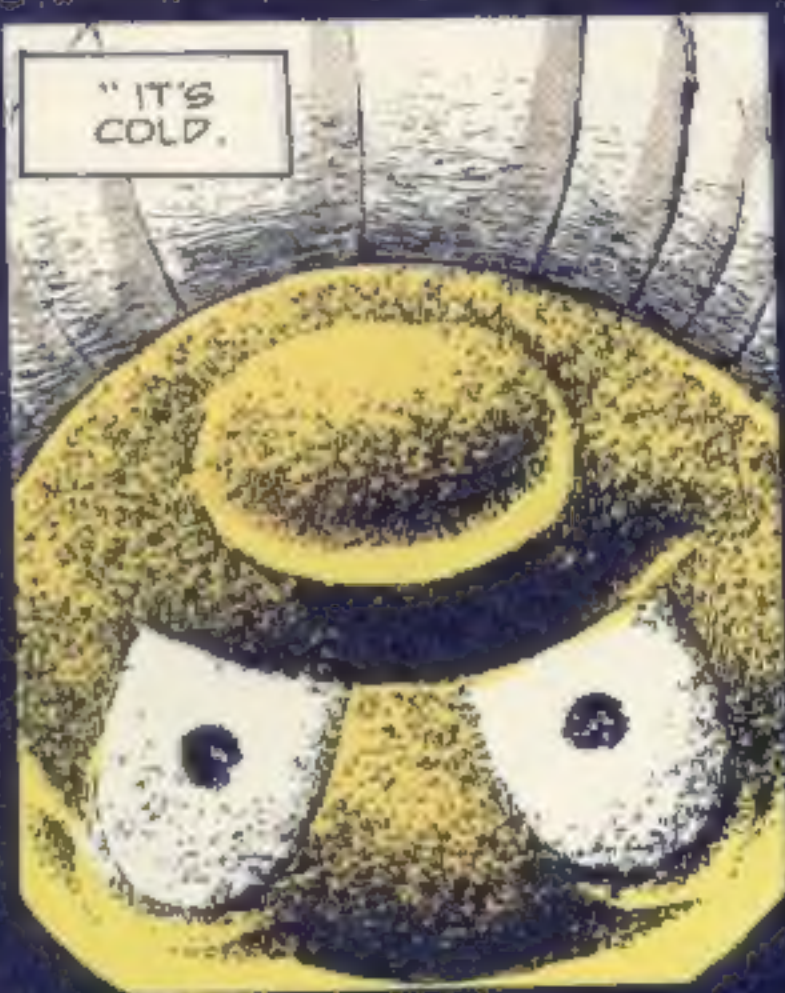
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"IT'S
COLD."



"SO
COLD."



"--THE EARTH
WE KNEW IS GONE.
THE ALIENS HAVE
TAKEN IT AS THEIR
OWN."



"WE'VE
BEEN ON
THE RUN
FOR WEEKS--"

"POWER TO THE SATELLITE
UPLINKS WENT OUT WHEN THE
CREATURES FINALLY SEVERED
THE MAIN UNDERGROUNDS.
THERE WOULD BE NO MORE
TRANSMISSIONS."



"I--I USED
TO COME HERE
WHEN I WAS
A KID."

THERE WERE MORE
SOPHISTICATED ATTRAC-
TIONS DOWN BY THE SHORE--
THREE-DIMENSIONAL STUFF,
INFRA-LIGHT, GRAVITY CHAM-
BERS--BUT I WAS PREOCCU-
PIED WITH THE MACHINES."

CHARLIE
CHEESE
PIZZA



"FOR SOME REASON
WE DON'T FEEL THE
CREATURES LIKE THE
OTHERS. WE'VE BEEN
ABLE TO RESIST
HER MENTAL LURE..."

I DIDN'T KNOW WHY BACK
THEN, BUT NOW I THINK I
UNDERSTAND. THEY NEVER
KNEW PAIN, THE FEAR OF
DEATH--

--AND IF YOU NEVER
LIVE, YOU CAN NEVER DIE.
THERE'S A KIND OF
IMMORTALITY IN THAT.

THAT'S
ENOUGH,
PAUL.

YOU--
YOU USED
TO PLAY
HERE?

"...WHILE SHE USES THE
OTHERS TO BREED HER
CHILDREN."



"AMY'S
ALL I HAVE
LEFT."

SHOW
ME, SHOW
ME WHAT
IT WAS
LIKE.

"I WANT HER
TO KNOW SOME-
THING GOOD,
SOMETHING DECENT,
BEFORE SHE DIES."



"BEFORE
WE ALL
DIE."

PRETEND
FOR ME.

THAT
SHOULD BE
EASY.

WE'VE BEEN
PRETENDING FOR
MONTHS--PRE-
TENDING THERE'S
A CHANCE, PRE-
TENDING THERE'S
A REASON TO--



-- GO
ON.







OUR JOURNEY BACK TO EARTH HAD AN EERIE *STILLNESS* TO IT. HOW DID OLD-TIME SAILORS PUT IT--? "THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM."

GATEWAY STATION WAS LIKE A *JEWEL* SUSPENDED OVER THE BLUE CURVE OF EARTH. STRIPPED OF *CON-TEXT*, IT GLITTERED WITH RARE BEAUTY.

WE HAD *STOLEN* THE ALIEN'S *MOTHER QUEEN*-- AND WE WOULD *USE* HER TO GATHER, THEN *DESTROY* HER CHILDREN ON EARTH.

RIPLEY, WE'RE ALMOST SET TO DOCK.

I KNOW, NEWT. COME IN.

RIPLEY SPENT *HOURS* ON THE SECURITY DECK, WATCHING HER. JUST... *WATCH-ING*.

I FOUND MY PEACE IN THE SOULLESS EMPTINESS OF SPACE.

RIPLEY FOUND *HERS* IN THE PITILESS *CONFINES* OF THE ALIEN QUEEN'S *POD*.

I'VE BEEN *STUDYING* IT. THE WAY IT MOVES. THE WAY IT *THINKS*.

I THOUGHT THAT BY *SURROUNDING* HER WITH THE *HIDES* OF HER DEAD, SHE WOULD *WITH-DRAW* INTO THE SANCTITY OF THE *POD*. BUT THAT'S NOT IT AT *ALL*.

IT KNOWS.

IT-- *SHE*-- KNOWS *EVERY-THING*.

CHRIST, NEWT-- SHE KNOWS.

AND SHE DOESN'T CARE.

GATEWAY STATION.

...WE'VE LOST ALL COMMUNICATION WITH EARTH SINCE YOU LEFT. ATMOSPHERIC *STATIC* MAKES TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE.

WHAT--
WHAT ABOUT THE SATELLITE UPLINKS? THE LITTLE GIRL--?

ANYONE LEFT ON EARTH BELONGS TO THE ALIEN. THAT LITTLE GIRL'S DEAD.

FOR HER SAKE, I *PRAY* SHE'S DEAD.

THERE'S SOME-
THING *ELSE*--
WE PICKED IT UP
NOT LONG AFTER
YOU LEFT:

WE'VE BEEN GETTING BIZARRE *TEMPERATURE* READINGS FROM THE SURVIVING HIGH ALTITUDE WEATHER MARKERS. THE GLOBAL TEMPERATURE HAS *DROPPED* AN AVERAGE OF FIFTEEN TO TWENTY DEGREES.

GOD.

NO.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

IT'S NOTHING *TERRAN*--WE CHECKED.

MY GOD.

IT'S THE *OTHER*--
THE ONE THAT
SPOKE TO ME ON
ACHERON...

...WE
BROUGHT
IT HERE.

NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE METHODOLOGY MIMICS OUR OWN *TERRAFORMING* TECHNOLOGY.

WE TRACKED THE ENERGY SOURCE INTO SPACE, AND MANAGED TO PULL A LONG-RANGE CHROMA OFF ONE OF THE SURVIVING *SPY* SATELLITES.



ITS COMPANION *DIED* ON ACHERON, LONG BEFORE THE NOSTROMO--LONG BEFORE *ANY* OF IT. IT *FOLLOWED* US AS WE SEARCHED FOR THE ALIEN'S HOME, THEN IT *RE-TURNED* WITH US TO EARTH.

WE THOUGHT IT *SHARED* OUR HATRED OF THE ALIEN--

--BUT IT WANTED *EARTH*, NOT REVENGE.

WE'RE WASTING TIME, DAMMIT-- IT DOESN'T *MATTER*. NOTHING MATTERS EXCEPT THOSE *THINGS*.

DIDN'T YOU *HEAR* ME, RIPLEY? THAT *CREATURE*-- WHATEVER THE HELL IT IS-- IS EMPLOYING *TERRAFORMING* TECHNOLOGY. THERE WON'T BE ANY EARTH LEFT IF WE DON'T--

YOU DON'T *GET* IT, DO YOU?

THIS ISN'T ABOUT EARTH.

THIS IS FOR *ME*. ONCE THOSE CREATURES ARE DEAD-- I'M *THROUGH* WITH IT.

I SEE--IT'S EASIER WHEN YOU JUST DON'T *GIVE* A SHIT.

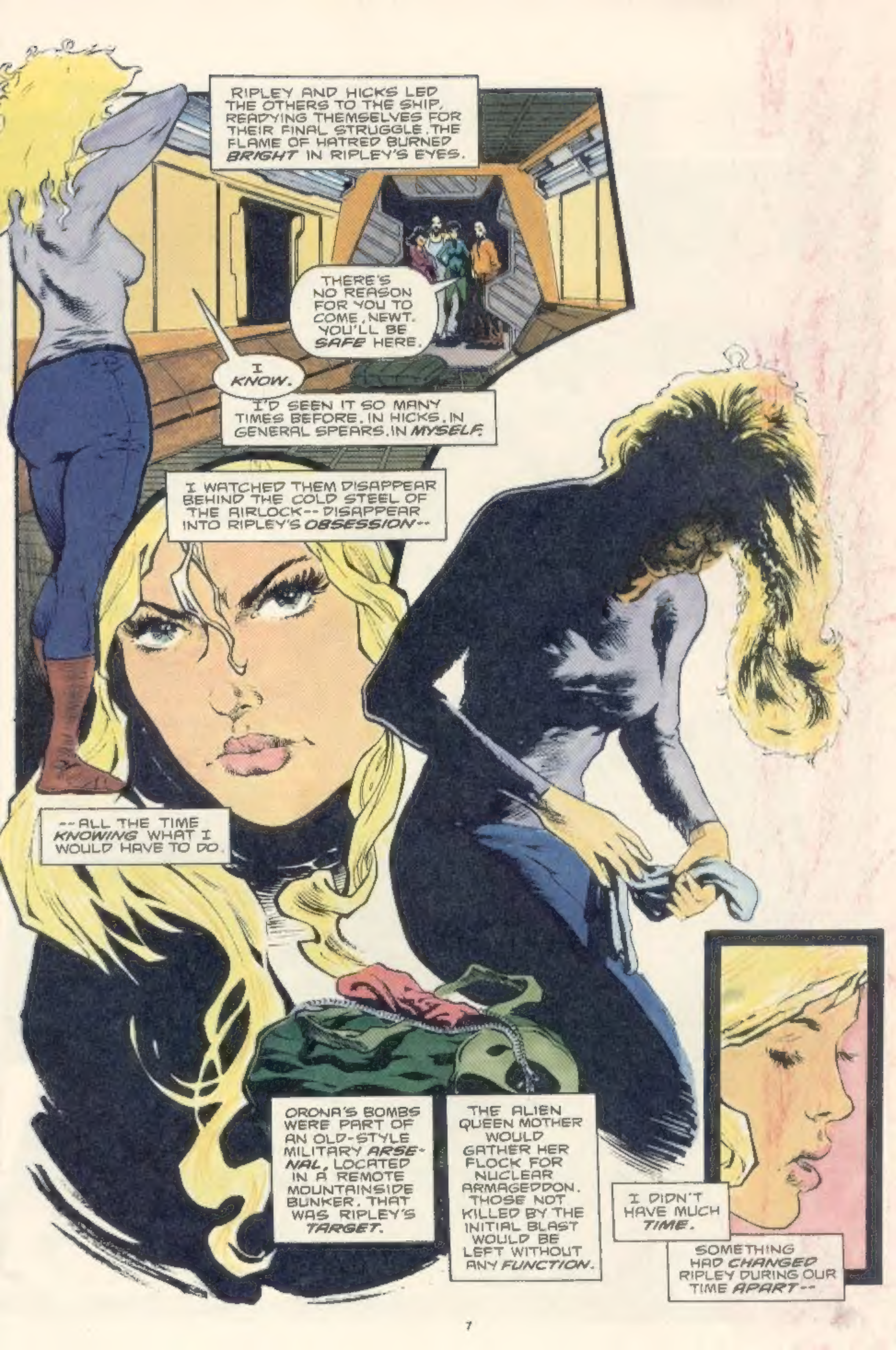
THE MILITARY, THE CORPORATION--THEY BROUGHT THE ALIEN TO EARTH FOR A *REASON*. THEY TRIED TO *BUY ME* THE SAME WAY.

I OWE THE ALIEN SOME *PAYBACK*, BUT I DON'T OWE YOUR *EARTH* A GODDAMN *THING*. WE'RE GOING TO FINISH THIS--*NOW*.

GREAT-- FIRST WE *GRAVITY-DRIVE* ACROSS THE GALAXY TO PLAY TAXICAB WITH SOME ALIEN *THING*, AND NOW WE'RE ORDERED BACK TO *EARTH*.

I'LL GO ALONG FOR THE *RIDE*, BUT I'M TELLING YOU-- IF RIPLEY TRIES TO PULL ANOTHER *SUN* ON ME, THERE'S GOING TO BE *TROUBLE*.

YEAH--THIS TIME SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY *SHOOT*.



RIPLEY AND HICKS LED THE OTHERS TO THE SHIP, READYING THEMSELVES FOR THEIR FINAL STRUGGLE. THE FLAME OF HATRED BURNED BRIGHT IN RIPLEY'S EYES.

THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO COME, NEWT. YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE.

I KNOW.

I'D SEEN IT SO MANY TIMES BEFORE. IN HICKS. IN GENERAL SPEARS. IN MYSELF.

I WATCHED THEM DISAPPEAR BEHIND THE COLD STEEL OF THE AIRLOCK-- DISAPPEAR INTO RIPLEY'S OBSESSION--

-- ALL THE TIME KNOWING WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO DO.

ORONA'S BOMBS WERE PART OF AN OLD-STYLE MILITARY ARSENAL, LOCATED IN A REMOTE MOUNTAIN-SIDE BUNKER. THAT WAS RIPLEY'S TARGET.

THE ALIEN QUEEN MOTHER WOULD GATHER HER FLOCK FOR NUCLEAR ARMAGEDDON. THOSE NOT KILLED BY THE INITIAL BLAST WOULD BE LEFT WITHOUT ANY FUNCTION.

I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME.

SOMETHING HAD CHANGED RIPLEY DURING OUR TIME APART--

--AND YET, IN A *REAL* WAY, SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO WOULD TRULY *UNDERSTAND* WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO DO.

LOOKS LIKE THE MILITARY BOMB SPECIALISTS WERE IN QUITE A *HURRY* TO GET IN.

YOUR DR. ORONA HAD THEM WIRE THE NUKES INTO A SEQUENTIAL DETONATION PATTERN JUST *PRIOR* TO EVACUATION.

GOD ONLY KNOWS.

MAYBE THE SEQUENCE WAS INTERRUPTED BY SOME *NATURAL* PHENOMENON. THESE WEAPONS WERE NEVER MEANT TO WITHSTAND EXPOSURE TO THE ELEMENTS--

GOD ONLY KNOWS WHY THEY DIDN'T BLOW THE *FIRST TIME*.

--THERE'S ENOUGH FIREPOWER HERE TO LEVEL THE *CONTINENT*, BUT THE BOMBS THEMSELVES ARE FRAGILE AS *DUST*.

RIPLEY--
HICKS!

DOWN
HERE!

I THINK I FIGURED OUT WHY THE BOMBS NEVER
DETONATED--



YOU DON'T
HAVE TO LIKE
IT. TLLY--
JUST FIX
IT

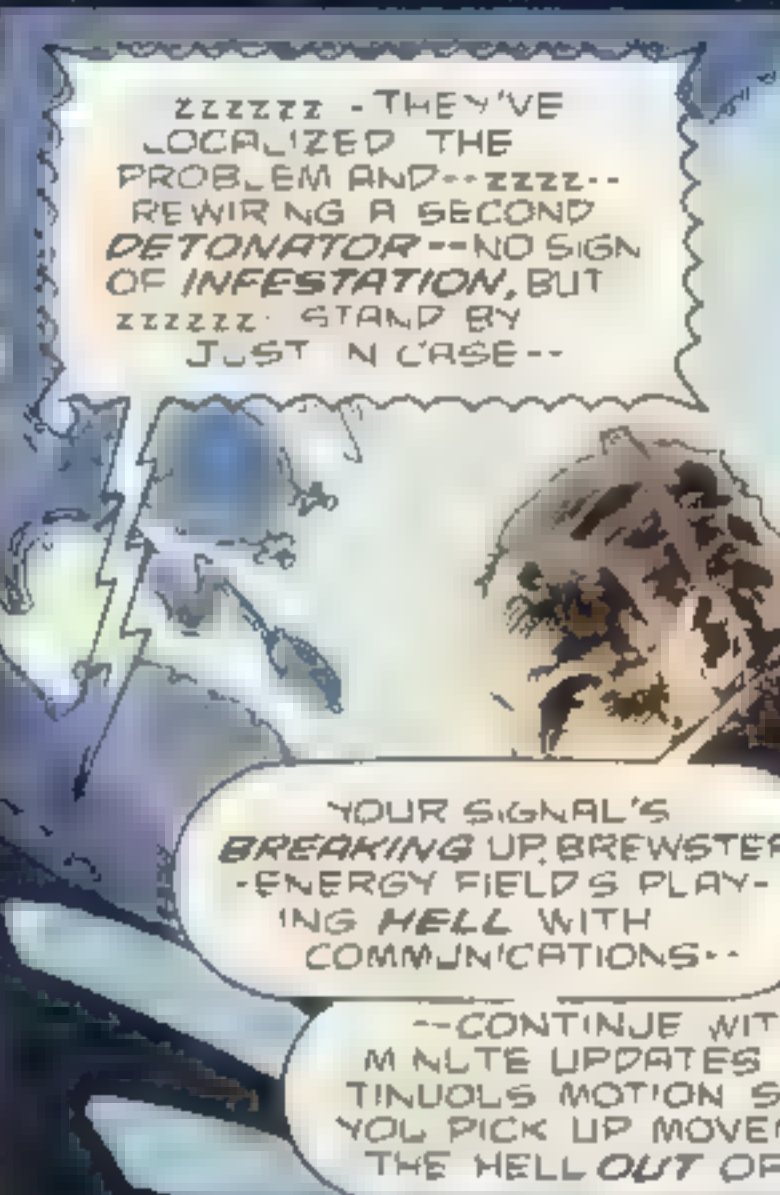


--AND IT'S MORE
THAN CORROSION.
SOMEBODY DECIDED
TO PUT A STOP TO
THIS COUNTDOWN
PERMANENTLY.

WHAT THE
HELL DID THIS?
DOESN'T LOOK
LIKE ANY KIND OF
CONVENTIONAL
BLUR

I DON'T
LIKE THIS--
I DON'T
LIKE IT
ONE BIT.

RADIO THE
DROP SHIP
THIS PROJECT'S
A GO.



ZZZZZZ - THEY'VE
LOCALIZED THE
PROBLEM AND--ZZZZ--
REWIRING A SECOND
DETONATOR--NO SIGN
OF INFESTATION, BUT
ZZZZZZ-- STAND BY
JUST IN CASE--

YOUR SIGNAL'S
BREAKING UP, BREWSTER
-ENERGY FIELD'S PLAY-
ING HELL WITH
COMMUNICATIONS--

--CONTINUE WITH TEN-
MINUTE UPDATES AND CON-
TINUOUS MOTION SWEEPS
YOU PICK UP MOVEMENT, GET
THE HELL OUT OF THERE



WHAT
THE--?



SIR, DID
YOU AUTHORIZE
A LOWER
DECK LAUNCH
SEQUENCE?



WHAT?

SOMEONE'S
BROKEN INTO ONE
OF THE *LOADER* BAYS,
JESUS - THEY'RE LAUNCHING
ONE OF THE CARGO SHIPS!



GET ME AN
OPEN LINE
INTO THAT
VESSEL!



THIS IS CAPTAIN
MCQUADE. IDENTIFY
YOURSELF!

I - I'M
SORRY
CAPTAIN

BUT THIS
IS THE
ONLY WAY.

AMY'S
NOT
DEAD

I CAN
FEEL
IT

I'D LEARNED A
LOT WATCHING
HICKS. I TRIANGU-
LATED A COURSE
USING THE COORDINATES
FROM AMY'S LAST VIDEO
TRANSMISSION AND
BURNED THE SHIPS
GO CODES FROM THE
GATEWAY SECURITY
COMPLER

THE CARGO SHIPS
WERE DESIGNED
TO BE PLOTTED BY
MAINLINE FIELD
SOLDIERS. MOST OF
THE ON-BOARD
SYSTEMS WERE
STRICTLY AUTOMAT-
IC.

SHE WAS JUST
ONE LITTLE GIRL,
LOST IN THE RUN
OF MAN'S GREED
AND MADNESS

WE'D NEVER
EVEN MET.
BUT I KNEW
HER

HER NAME
WAS AMY--

--HER NAME
WAS NEWT.

WE WOULD
SURVIVE THIS
TOGETHER--
OR NOT AT
ALL.

I WASN'T SURE WHERE TO BEGIN-- AND THEN I HEARD THE SCREAMS: JUST LIKE BEFORE-- LIKE ACHERON, LIKE ALL THE REST...

THE SOUND WAS CLOSE, REVERBERATING BENEATH THE BROKEN STREETS

EACH TIME I ESCAPED THE ALIEN, IT SEEMED TO BRING ME BACK. I BEGAN TO REALIZE THIS WAS MORE THAN CAPRICIOUS FATE OR CHANCE--

THE TERRIBLE SCREAMS GREW LOUDER, AND I WANTED TO JOIN THEM--

--ADD MY VOICE TO THE RISING HOWL OF PAIN AND HORROR

OH MY GOD--

--IT WAS DESIGN IT WAS MEANT TO BE

NOOOO---!

BA-BLAM!

BA-BLAM!
BA-BLAM!
BA-BLAM!

JESUS, GOD-- I DIDN'T WANT TO DIE.

I COULD FEEL MY SKIN **BLISTER** FROM THE HEAT OF THE BLASTER FIRE. THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF THEM...**THOUSANDS**--

AMY!
AMY--!

POOM!
POOM!

ALL **ADJUNCTS** OF THEIR QUEEN--DESPERATE TO PROTECT HER. PROTECT HER UNBORN CHILDREN.

GO TO HELL, YOU BASTARD!

AS LONG AS I WAS ALIVE I WAS A **THREAT** TO THEIR SURVIVAL. SOMEHOW, INTUITIVELY, THE ALIEN INTELLIGENCE **KNEW** THAT.

YEAH, COME ON

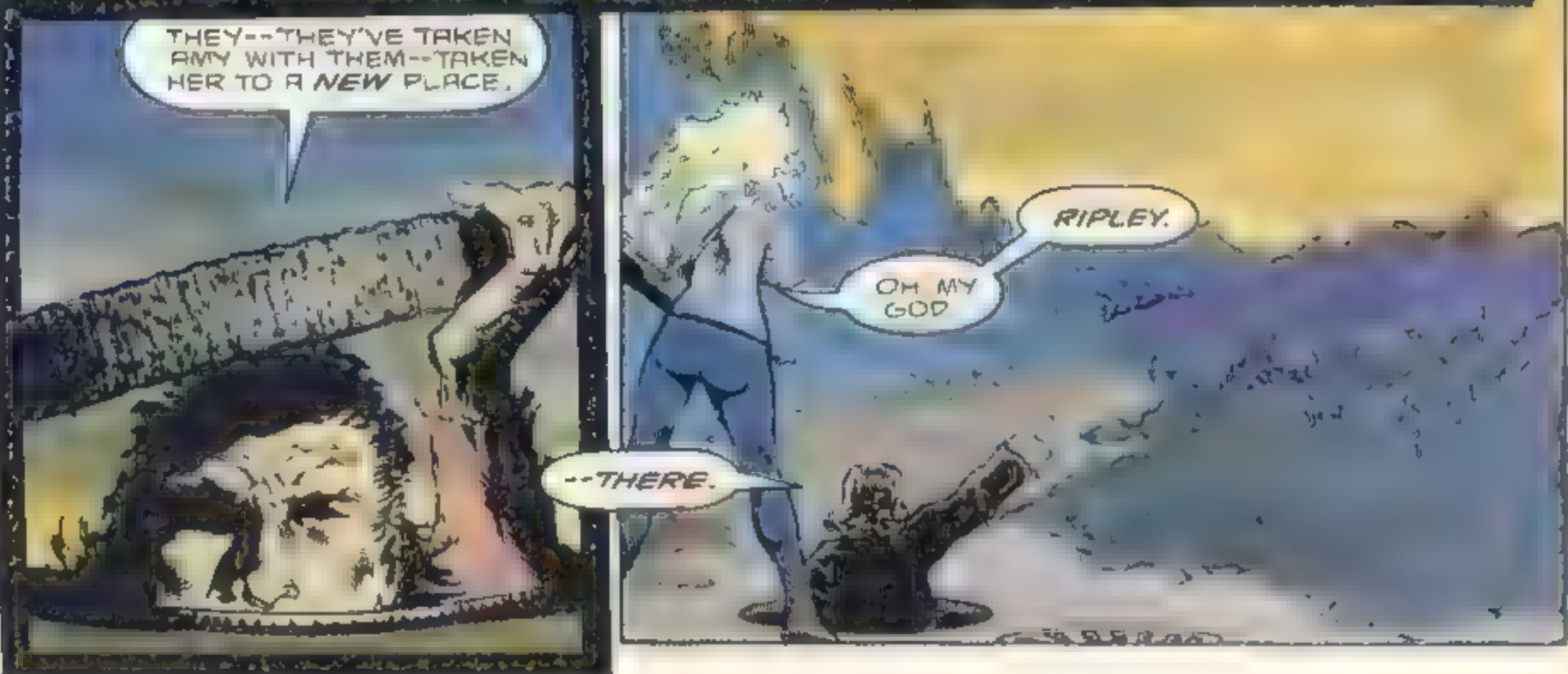
PLOOM!

BLAM

BLAM

I WANTED AMY--

--THEY WANTED ME.





CAN WE PLEASE
LEAVE? THIS
PLACE GIVES ME
THE CREEPS

THAT'S
IT - THREE
HOURS AND
COUNTING

REALLY?
I THINK IT'S
PERFECT.

"THE ALIEN KNOWS DEATH
BETTER THAN ANY OF US
THIS PLACE IS FILLED
WITH IT. MAYBE THAT
FRIGHTENS YOU--"



BUT IT WELCOMES
THE ALIEN BITCH LIKE
AN OLD FRIEND."

BREWSTER--I'M
PICKING UP ANOTHER
SHIP ON THE INBOARD
RADAR. AUTOMATIC SCAN
SAYS IT'S CARGO
CLASS--

--REGISTERED
TO GATEWAY!

THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE.
DOUBLE CHECK
THE SYSTEM--

"- THEN GET
RIPLEY UP
HERE, PRONTO!"

WE'RE
GETTING CLOSE
GOD, THOSE THINGS
ARE EVERY-
WHERE!

WHAT'S
WRONG?

IT'S ONE THING
TO PRE-SET COORDI-
NATES, BUT I'VE NEVER
FLOWN ONE OF THESE
AT CLOSE RANGE.

I'M
SCARED..

SHIT!
WE'RE LOSING
POWER! I DON'T
KNOW HOW TO
STOP IT!

WE'RE
GOING
IN!

WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, ANOTHER
SHIP? GATEWAY HASN'T
CLOCKED ANY GROUND-
BASED EARTH TRAFFIC
FOR WEEKS!

IT'S
FROM
GATE
WAY--

AND
IT'S ABOUT
TO--

"--CRASH!"

SCREEEEEEEE



NNGHHH

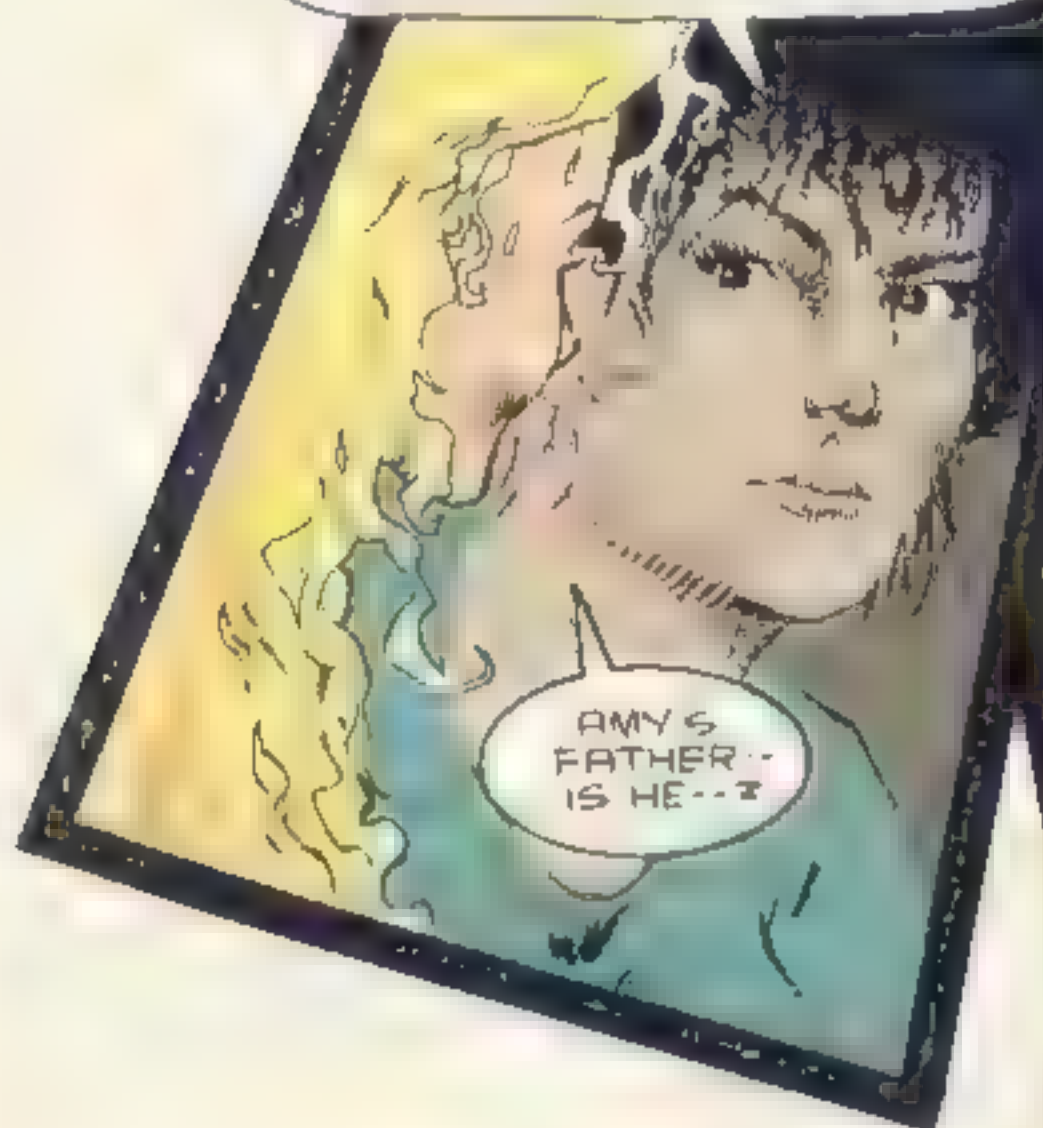
HAVE TO--
HAVE TO GET
AWAY FROM
THE *SHIP*.

CHRIST--
I'M SORRY--
I'M SO
SORRY

YOU
SHOULD
BE

WHAT THE HELL DID YOU
THINK YOU WERE *DOING* BY
COMING HERE? YOU KNOW WHAT
WE'RE RISKING JUST BY *LAND-
ING*? THE MOUNTAIN'S *ALIVE*
WITH THOSE ALIEN THINGS--AND
THE BOMBS HAVE BEEN *ARMED*.

YOUR
PASSENGERS
UNCONSCIOUS,
BUT HE'LL
SURVIVE



AMY'S
FATHER--
IS HE--?



IS *THAT*
WHAT THIS WAS
ABOUT? DAMMIT,
NEWT--THE LITTLE
GIRL'S *DEAD*.

NO--
THEY'VE
TAKEN HER *WITH*
THEM--

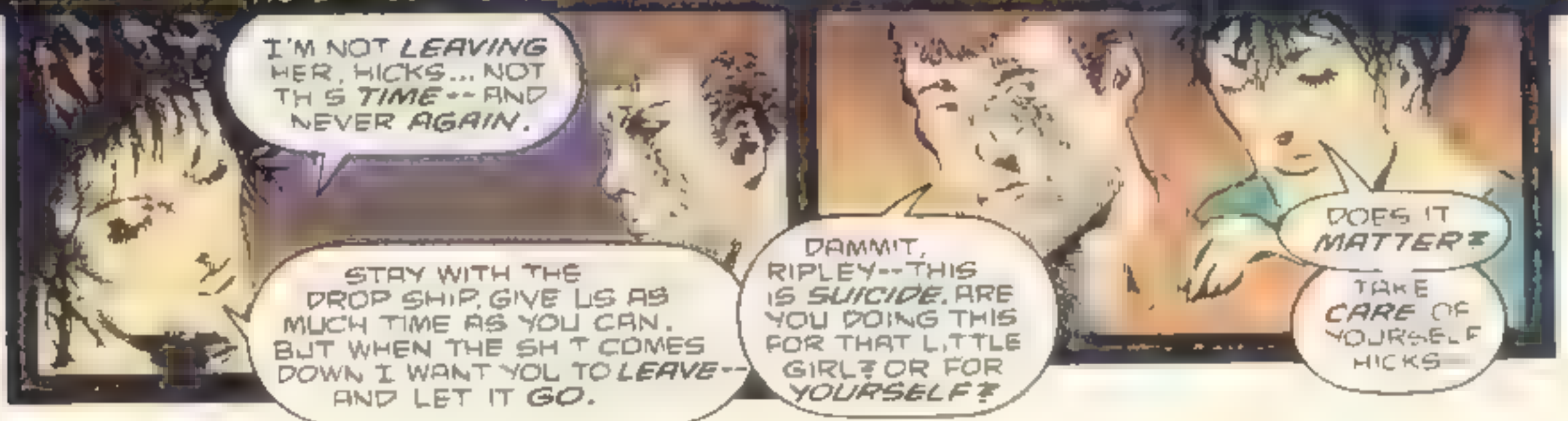
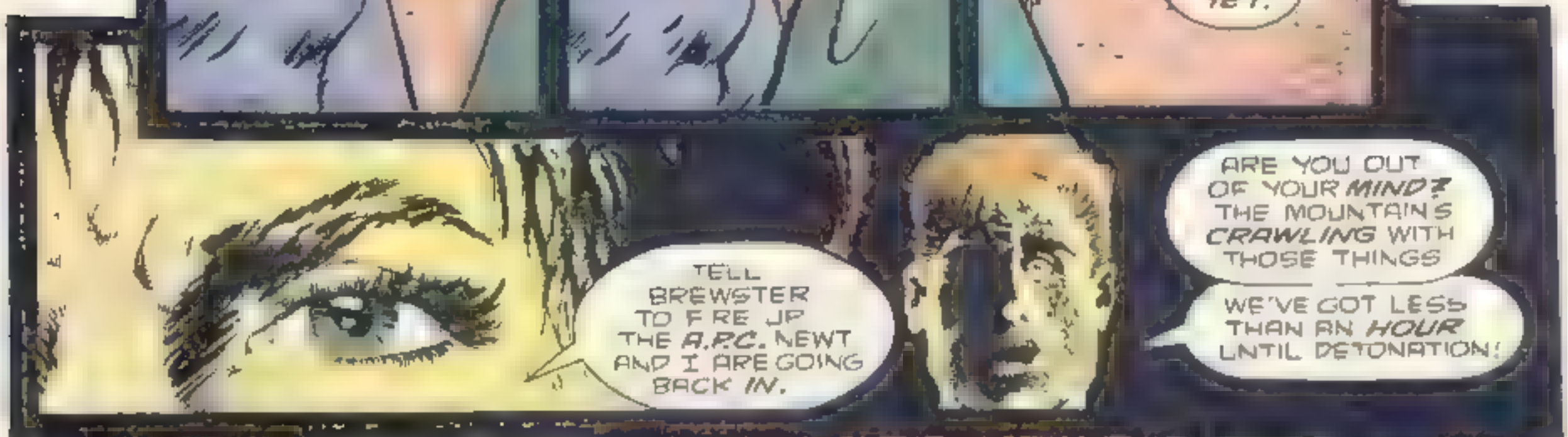
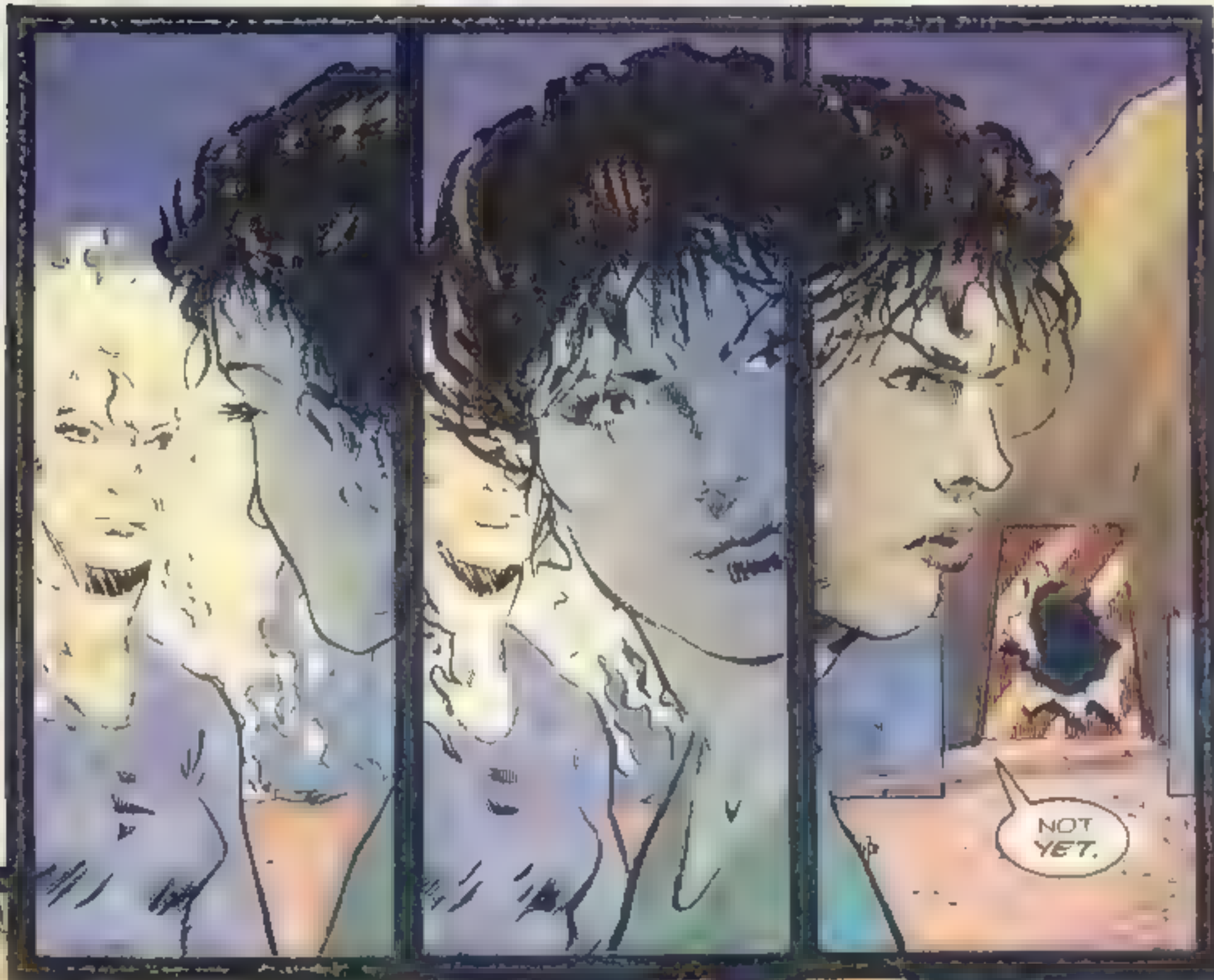
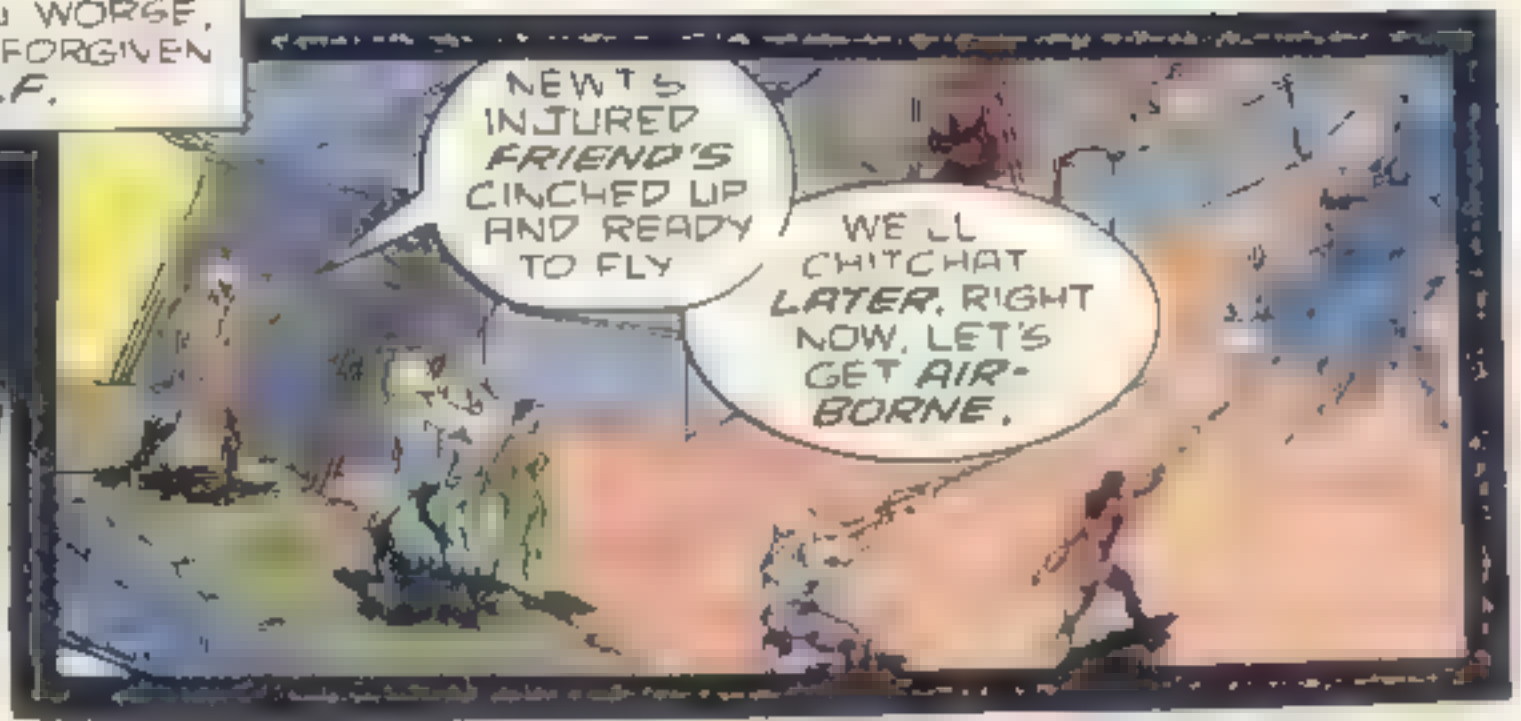
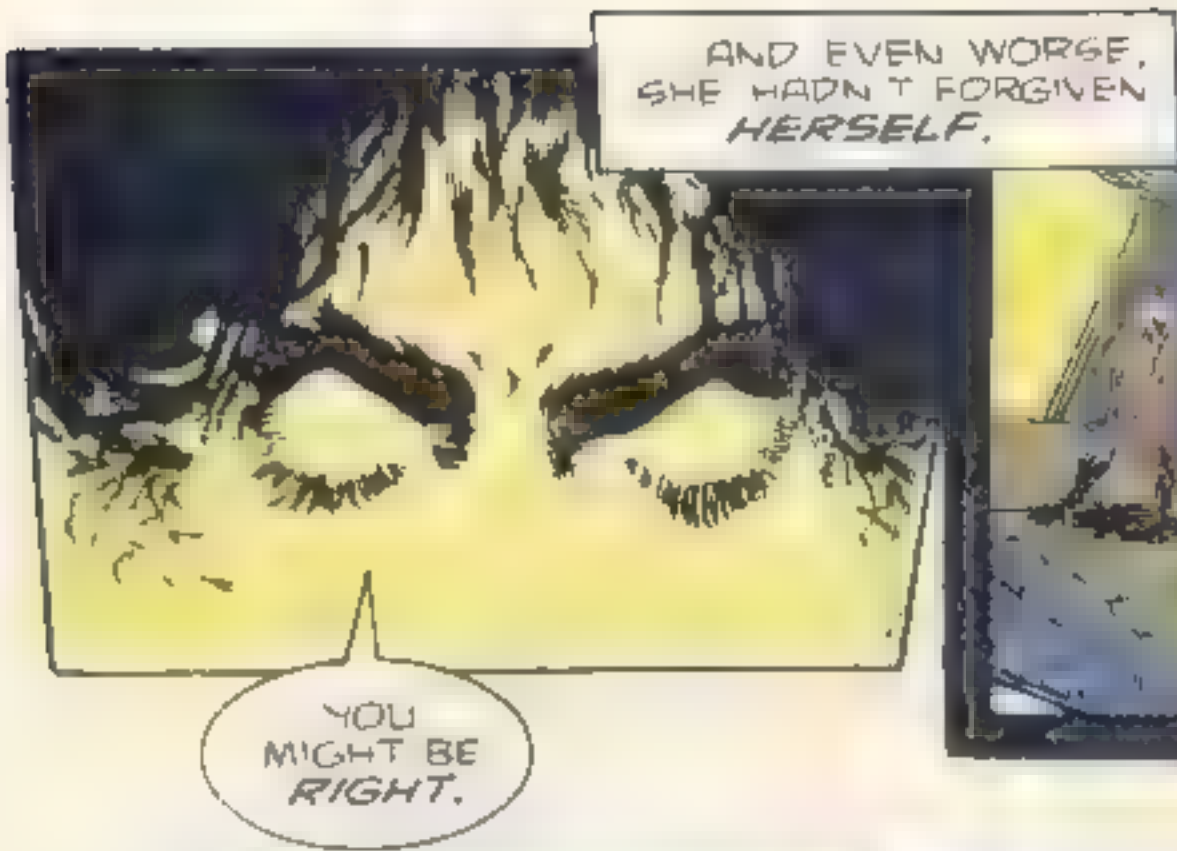
-- MAYBE
YOU CAN LEAVE
WITHOUT HER, BUT
I *CAN'T*.

SHE HAD RISKED *EVERY-
THING* TO PULL ME FROM
THE WRECKAGE OF THE
CARGO SHIP, BUT I STILL
COULDN'T *FORGIVE* RIPLEY
FOR LEAVING ME ALONE
AFTER *ACHERON*..

T-MINUS ONE HOUR
AND *COUNTING*,
SURROUNDED BY THESE
GODDAMN *THINGS*--



I THINK
SOMEONE'S
TRYING TO *TELL*
US SOMETHING!



"--NOW GET
THE HELL OUT
OF HERE."

RIPLEY HAD SPENT
YEARS TRYING TO
FORGET ALL SHE HAD
LEFT BEHIND. MORE
THAN FAMILY AND
CAREER--

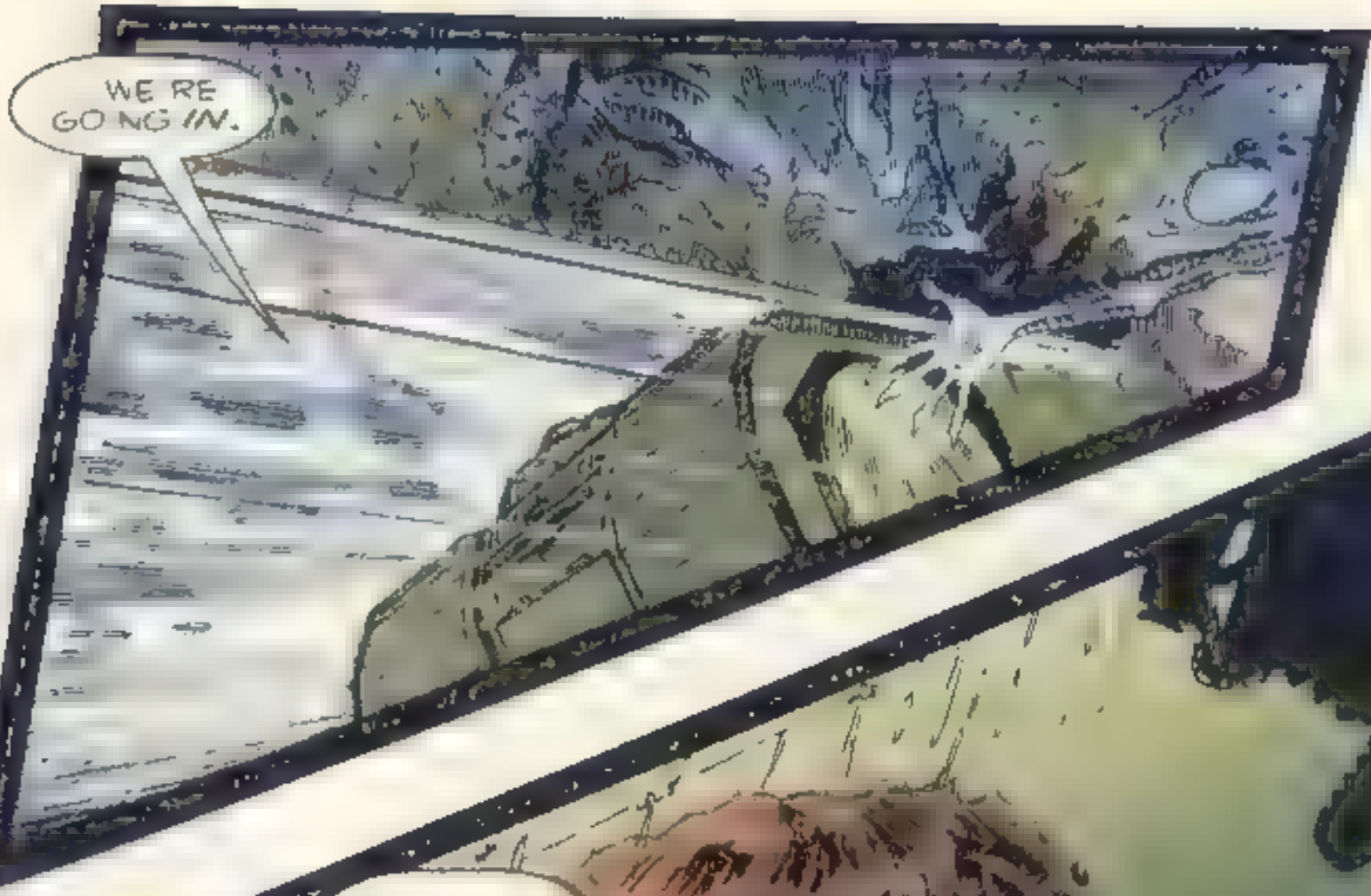
--SHE'D LOST
HER SELF-RESPECT
HER DIGNITY.

CHUNK!

I KNEW WHAT
HICKS WAS THINKING,
BUT HE WAS WRONG
THIS WASN'T SU-
CIDE. RIPLEY AND
I DIDN'T WANT
TO DIE--

--WE WERE TRYING
TO FIND A WAY TO
LIVE. MAYBE THE
LITTLE GIRL COULD
SHOW US.

HOLD
ON,
NEWT--



WE'RE GOING IN.



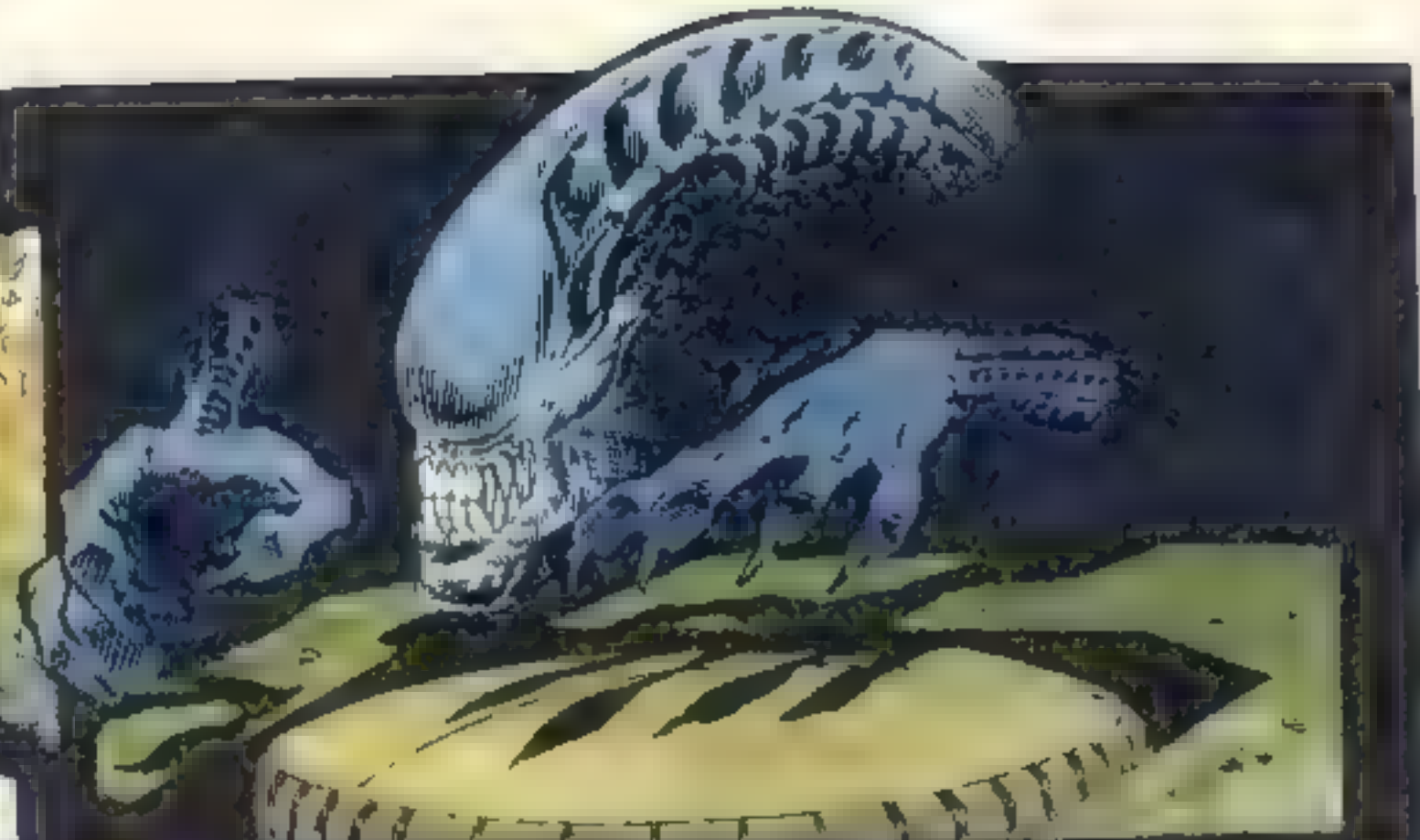
SON OF A BITCH!

WE'RE STARTING TO LOSE SYSTEM CONTROL. THE GODDAMN ACID MUST BE EATING THROUGH THE HYDRAULICS--

WHAT'S THAT MEAN--?

I MEANS I'M LOSING HER.. I'M LOS--

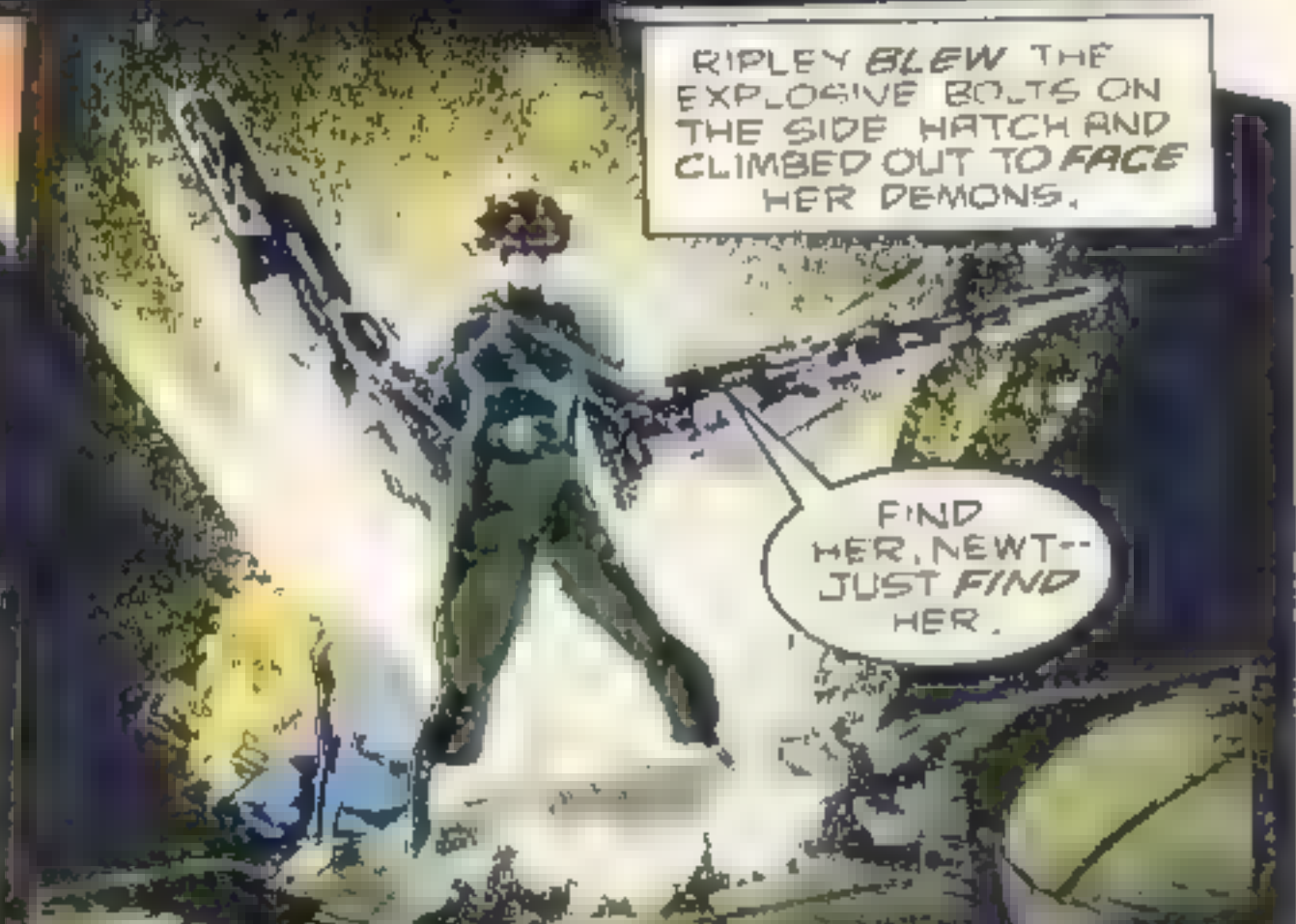
ERRRRRR



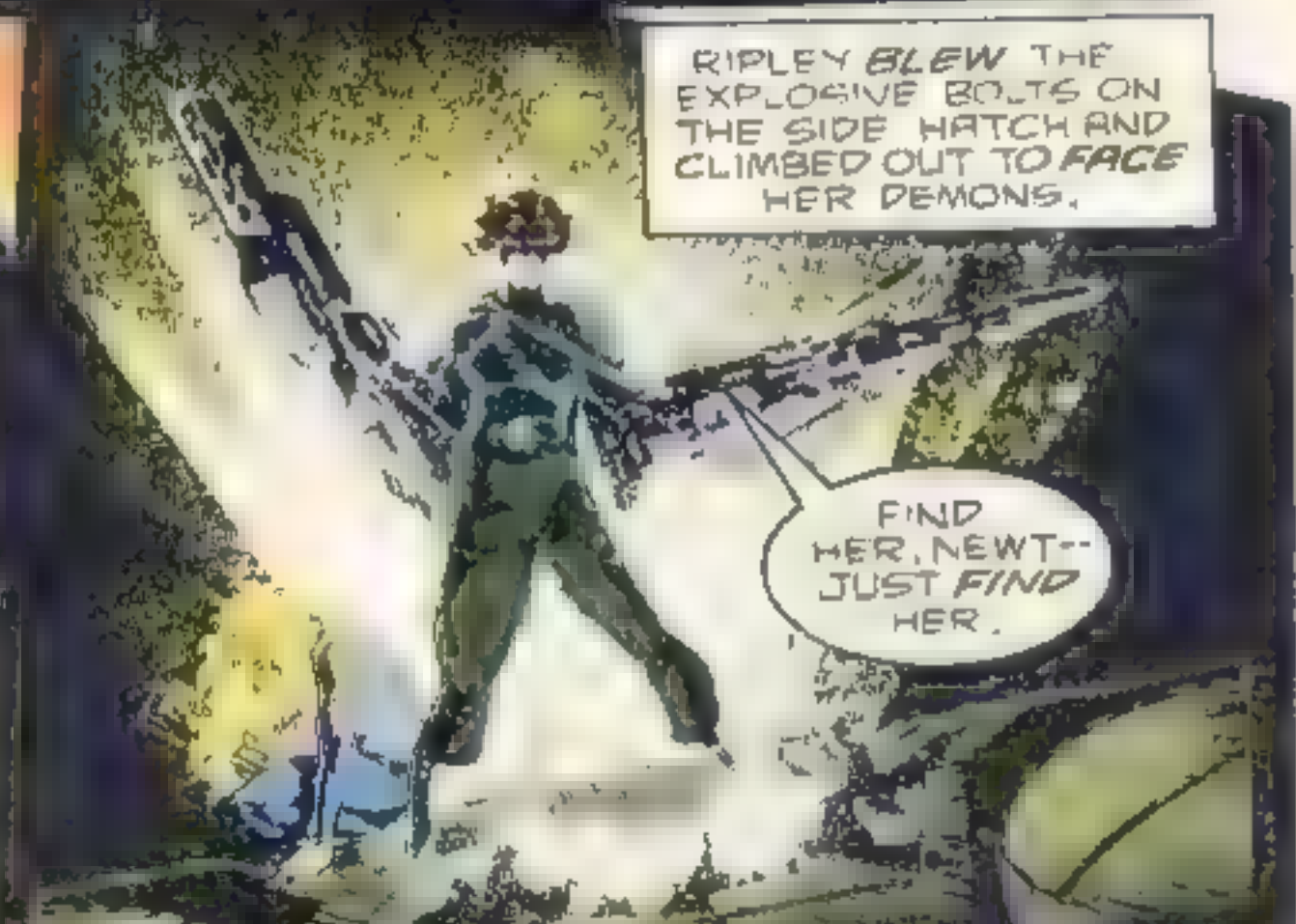
FOR A
MOMENT
THERE
WAS ONLY
DARKNESS--



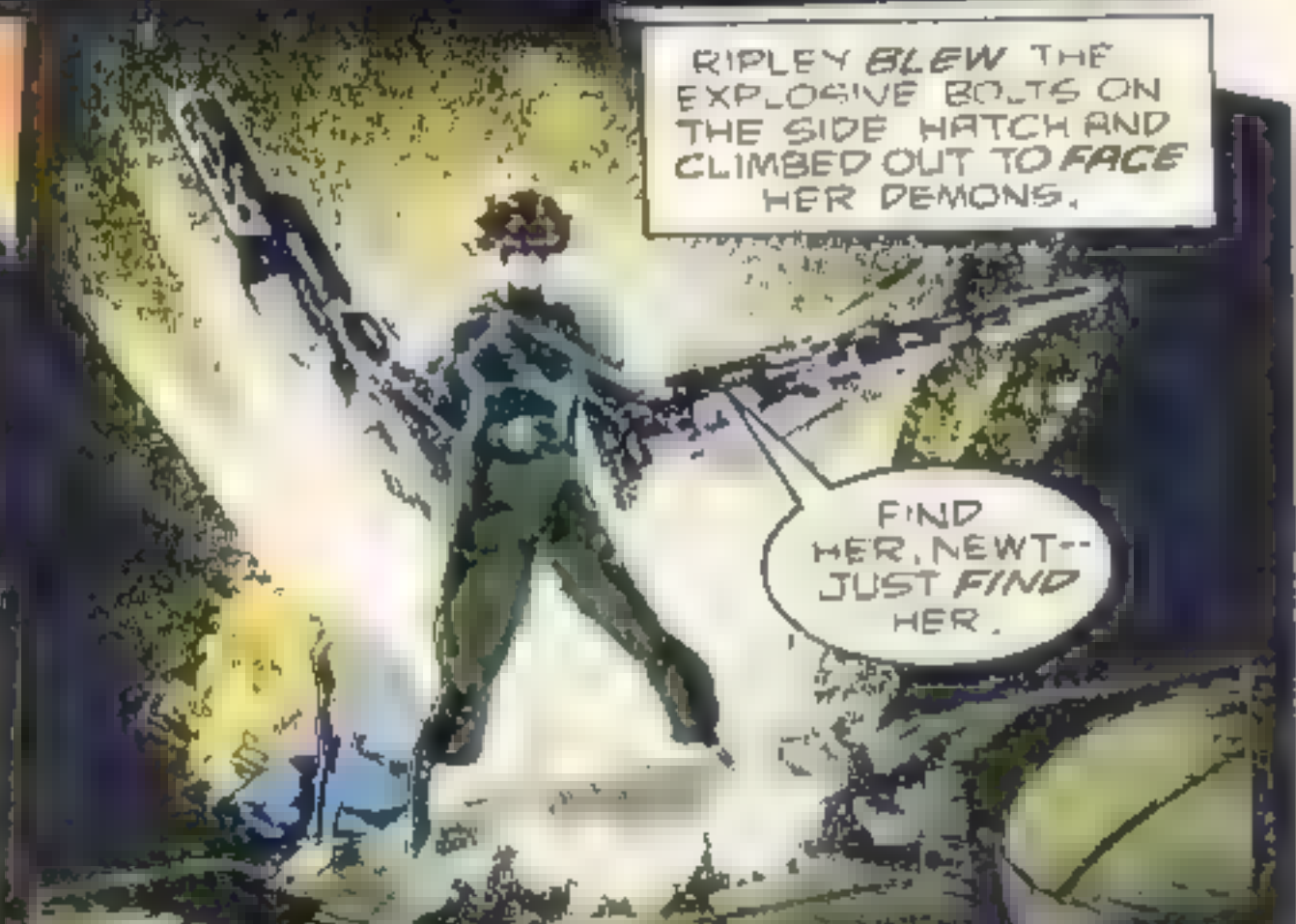
-- AND THEN
THERE WAS LIGHT.



RIPLEY BLEW THE
EXPLOSIVE BOLTS ON
THE SIDE HATCH AND
CLIMBED OUT TO FACE
HER DEMONS.



FIND
HER, NEWT--
JUST FIND
HER.



I FOLLOWED CLOSE
BEHIND, READY TO
FACE MY OWN.



AMY--!
AMY!



BLAM



TALK TO
ME--
AMY--GOD,
PLEASE!



BLAM



HELP
ME



AMY--!

OH
GOD!

HANG ON,
HONEY JUST
HANG ON!

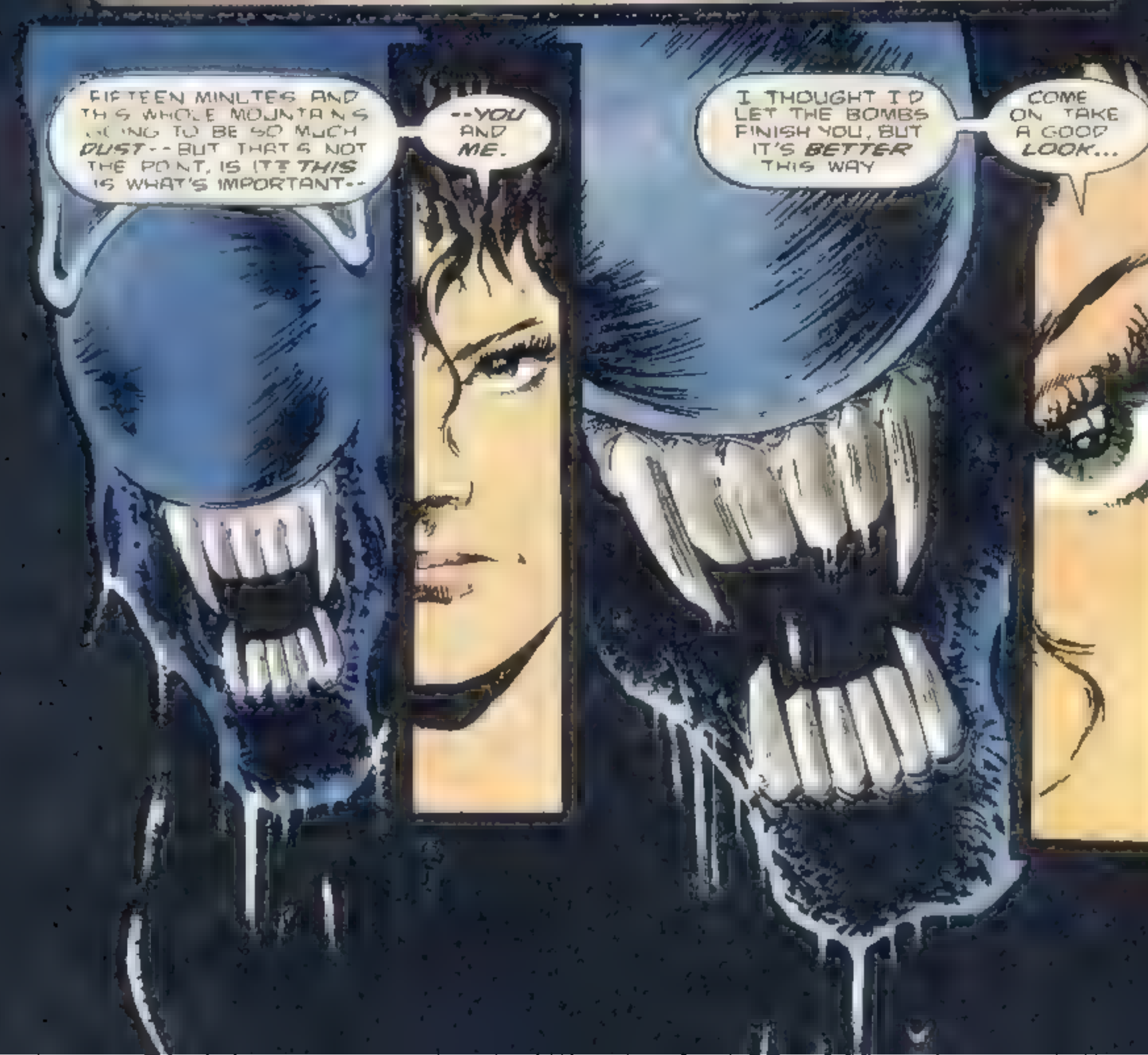
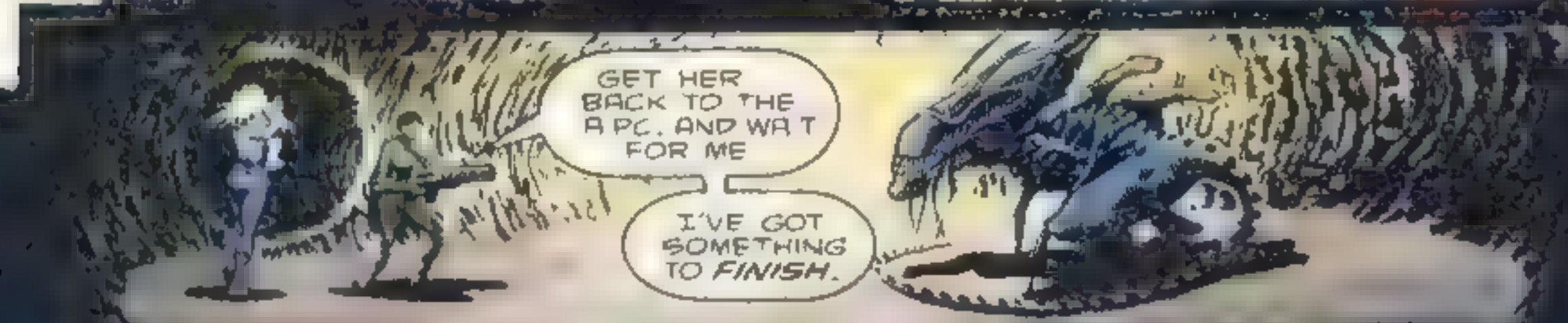
I KNEW
YOU WERE
ALL RIGHT--
I KNEW
IT!

HOLD ME--
PLEASE DON'T
LET THEM TAKE
ME AGAIN

PLEASE--!

NOOOO!

HEY,
BITCH--





IT'S THE
LAST THING
YOU'LL EVER
SEE.

BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA

DAMN IT,
REPLAY WHERE
THE HELL
ARE YOU?

TWELVE MINUTES
AND COUNTING

WE'RE EATING
UP OUR SAFETY
MARGIN BUT QUICK.

LAST TIME I
TRIED TO PLAY IT
SAFE, I ENDED UP
WITH A PISTOL
AGAINST MY HEAD--

--BUT THIS TIME
THERE'S NO ROOM
FOR DISPUTE IF WE'RE
NOT OUT OF HERE IN
FIVE MINUTES-- KISS
YOUR ASS GOOD-BYE



TWELVE MINUTES TO DETONATION WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT- SIDE.

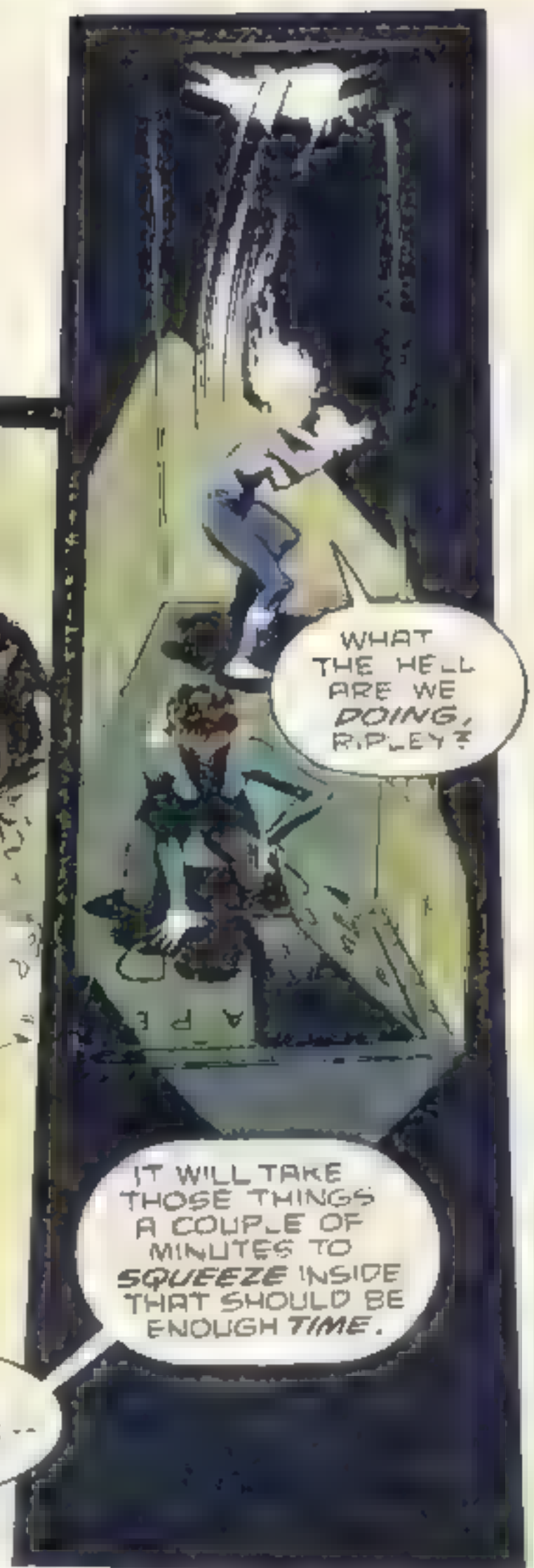
CHRIST, RIPLEY THE APC'S TOTALLED--

--I DON'T THINK THEY'RE GOING TO LET US WALK OUT



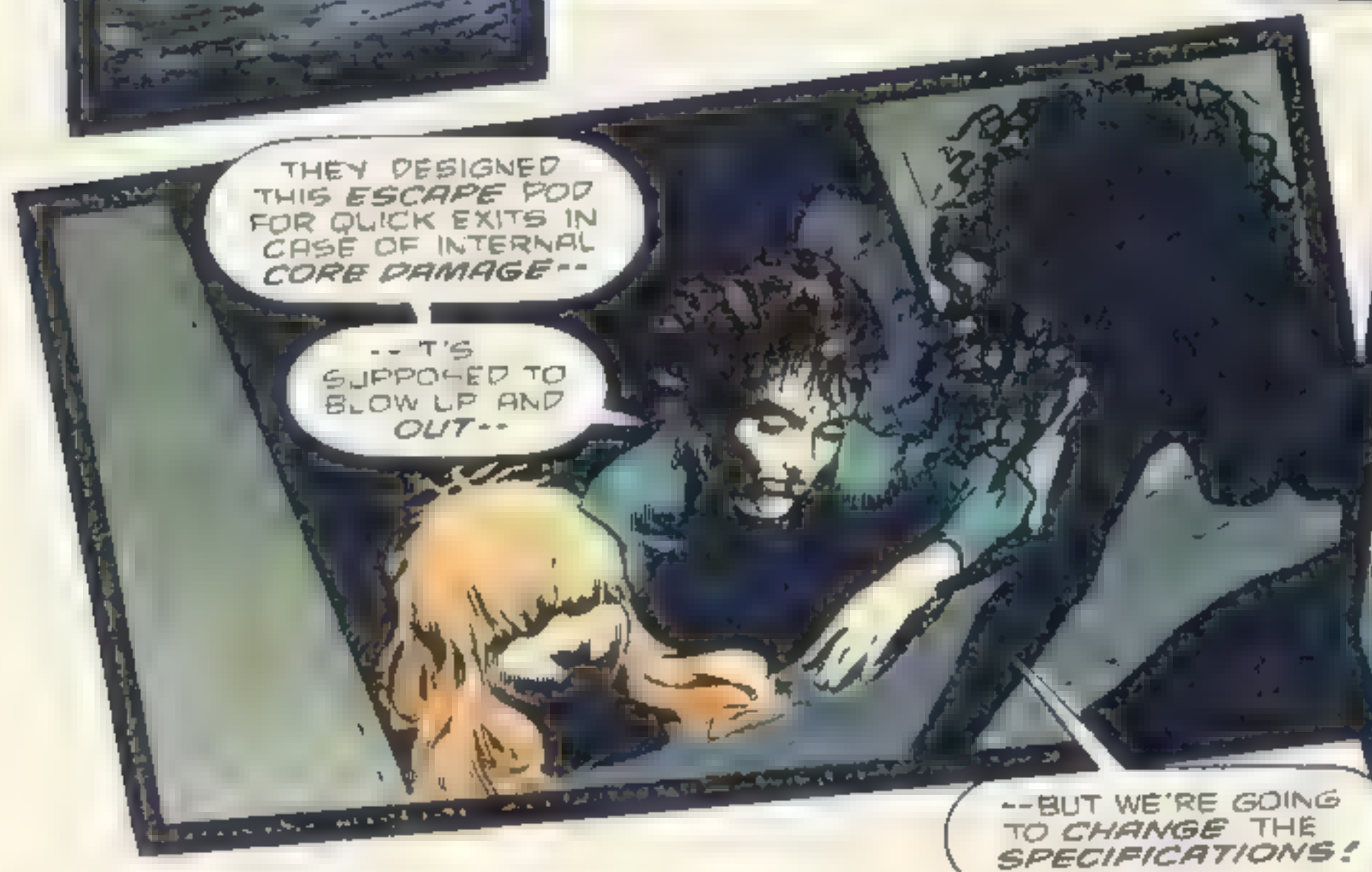
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT WALKING?

GET INSIDE THE APC-- NOW.



WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING, RIPLEY?

IT WILL TAKE THOSE THINGS A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO SQUEEZE INSIDE THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME.



THEY DESIGNED THIS ESCAPE POD FOR QUICK EXITS IN CASE OF INTERNAL CORE DAMAGE--

--IT'S SUPPOSED TO BLOW UP AND OUT--

--BUT WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE THE SPECIFICATIONS!



HOLD TIGHT--!



BLAM!



RIGHT, THAT'S IT
WE'RE OUT
OF HERE. I'M
SORRY, MAN,
BUT--

MY GOD-- IT LOOKS
LIKE SOME SORT OF
PROJECTILE-- OR
ESCAPE POD!

TAKE
'ER DOWN--
NOW!

WAIT A
MINUTE--
WHAT THE
HELL IS
THAT?

I REMEMBER THE REST
OF IT IN ISOLATED
FRAGMENTS. HICKS SAID
THE POD'S INTERNAL
CHUTE SLOWED US DOWN,
SOFTENING OUR IMPACT

ALL I KNEW-- ALL
I CARED-- WAS
THAT AMY WAS
SAFE.

THE NEXT THING
I REMEMBER IS
LYING IN THE DROP
SHE'S SICKBAY--
AND RIPLEY
STANDING OVER ME

SHE WANTED TO
HOLD ME, TELL ME
EVERYTHING WOULD
BE ALL RIGHT--BUT
SHE WAS AFRAID.

ONLY HALF-
CONSCIOUS, I WAS
A LITTLE GIRL
AGAIN AND I
TRUSTED HER

ARE WE GOING
TO SLEEP
ALL THE WAY
HOME?

GOD,
YES ALL
THE WAY
HOME--

AND
I'LL
NEVER
LEAVE
YOU

I DRIFTED
TO SLEEP
IN RIPLEY'S
ARMS,
KNOWING
SHE'D STILL
BE THERE
WHEN I
AWOKE.

-- KNOWING
IT WAS FINALLY
OVER.

IT WAS WHILE
RECOVERING
ON GATEWAY
THAT I DECIDED
TO WRITE THIS
DIARY-- MY
RECORD OF
WHAT HAD HAP-
PENED. I HOPE
IT WILL SERVE
BOTH AS A
REMEMBRANCE--

-- AND A
WARNING.

RIPLEY, HICKS, TULLY,
FALK-- THEY WERE
ALIVE. THEY HAD FACED
THE ALIEN AND SUR-
VIVED. NO, IT WAS *MORE*
THAN THAT-- THEY HAD
CONQUERED.

I WOULD NEVER TELL
THEM THE *TRUTH*:
WHAT *IT* TOLD ME
VISCERALLY AS WE
LANDED ON THE ALIEN
QUEEN'S *WORLD*--

-- WHAT, IN SOME
STRANGE WAY, I
MUST HAVE KNOWN
ALL ALONG:

WE'D
BEEN
USED.

IT DESTROYED THE DETONATOR
CONNECTING ORONA'S BOMBS
IT HAD CALLED RIPLEY BACK TO
EARTH. *IT* HAD SENT US IN
SEARCH OF THE MOTHER QUEEN

IT USED US TO
ERADICATE THE ALIEN
SCOURGE SO *IT* COULD
TERRAFORM, THEN *TAKE*
EARTH FOR ITSELF

FOR AN INSTANT, I FELT
A WAVE OF ANGER.
EVERYTHING WE'D BEEN
THROUGH-- WAS IT ALL
A *SHAM*? A DANCE FOR
"THE OTHER'S" *PLEASURE*?

THEN I REMEMBERED
SOMETHING RIPLEY
HAD SAID: THIS WASN'T
ABOUT EARTH ANY-
MORE.

IT WAS
FOR US.

WE'D COME TO *TERMS*
WITH OUR FEAR AND
OUR PAIN. THERE WOULD
BE OTHER WORLDS FOR
US, NEW LIVES *FREE*
OF THE ALIEN.

HUMAN *GREED* AND
RAGE HAD BROUGHT
THE ALIEN TO EARTH.
WE HAD *FAILED*--

-- IT WAS TIME
TO *MOVE ON*.

PERHAPS EARTH'S
NEW INHABITANTS
WOULD *LEARN*
FROM OUR MISTAKES.

PERHAPS
NOT.

THE
END

BUG HUNT

c/o Dark Horse Comics
2008 S.E. Monroe St.
Milwaukie, OR 97222

Dear Diana —

Re *Aliens: Earth War* #2:

Impressive, very impressive.

However, I do hope Newt and Hicks have a much more active role to play over the course of the series' last two issues.

And I'm quite impressed that you're making headway in your effort to finally get the Dark Horse titles caught up and back on some semblance of a normal schedule.

This round's on you!

Uncle Elvis
Dawson Springs, KY

On me? Hey, Elvis, I may be liberated, but I'm no dope. If you pay for it, honey, I'll drink it!

Dear Bug Hunt,

I just picked up *Aliens: Earth War* #2, and I must say it was great. I would like to see more gore, though. John Bolton was an excellent choice for the cover artist — and one of the best artists in the field. Verheiden is an excellent writer, and Kieth's drawings kick butt. Even though you are a relatively small company, your comics give me more pleasure than any mega-company could. You're beautiful, babe — don't ever change.

Ray Evers, Jr.
Astoria, NY

Ray, dahling, let's do lunch. Apparently, it's on me.

Dear Diana,

So *that's* Ripley's plan. If it works, that's the end of the *Aliens*, for a while at least. Mark Verheiden will have to write about someone else for a while.

Me, I've only seen the *Aliens* films a couple of times. So what's interesting about the comics is the human beings. Both Ripley and Newt are fascinating to observe, both conditioned by their background and environment. What can it be like to be, literally, the last hope of the human race? Newt's opening dream was very powerful.

Both she and Ripley seem to feel almost a kinship with the Aliens. Respect for an enemy, or something more? [*Something more, as we've discovered this issue.*]

What Sam Kieth controversy? He's drawing this book exquisitely and fully deserves his turn in the spotlight. The only controversy that I know of is the argument over how you spell his name — and let's face it, he should know!

The coloring is pretty good, too, by the way, except where technical/production problems get in the way. It shows you can use color to create mood as much as black and white art.

Malcolm Bourne
Lancashire, England

"What Sam Kieth controversy"? Read on, MacDuff...

Dear (slightly less than previously) Dark Horse,

Under normal circumstances, I never write to letters columns for either praise or criticism. The reasons being that if you're doing well already, you certainly don't need *my* input (lord knows you get enough letters of praise already), and if you're not, I probably never bought the book in the first place. With *Earth War*, however, I seem to have followed a superbly written story line (by Mark Verheiden all the way) into a third series that has suddenly lost its visual magic.

The first series (drawn by Mark Nelson) employed an appropriately dark and ugly style ideal for the theme, although I would like to know why Newt's hair suddenly turned black. Nevertheless, the artwork had a hard, futuristic look that fit the setting quite well. The second series (drawn by Denis Beauvais) was greatly enhanced by the subtle blending of color that can only be achieved by a skilled airbrush artist. The color schemes emulated the movie almost photographically, Newt regained her natural hair color (and beauty), and that hard, futuristic look was maintained perfectly...

The third series (by Sam Kieth and Monika Livingston), however, has managed to completely lose any sense of atmosphere even remotely suggestive of what *Aliens* is. Now,

don't get me wrong, Sam Kieth is a fine artist, and although I am unfamiliar with any of his other work, I expect he would be extremely well-suited for something more along the lines of fantasy or horror in the more traditional sense. I'd love to see how he'd handle a *Swamp Thing* story. But...his style is *totally* ill-suited for the *Aliens* universe. Never before have I seen such a gross example of graphic "miscasting." The entire look, mood, feel, indeed the very essence of what this story was, has been utterly annihilated — replaced by an awkward mismatch of narration and illustration.

The once cold, lifeless, technological setting has suddenly become a warm, comfortable, natural-looking, almost *inviting* world, as alien to *Aliens* as the Aliens are to us. The characters, once hardened and realistic in appearance, and clad in relatively tight denim (or leather, or future equivalent), have become soft, sometimes even *comical* caricatures, draped in loose, baggy cloth from some obscure "flower child" mini-religion. Not even the Aliens themselves have been spared. Once veritable fortresses of shining silicon armor, they have degenerated into fleshy gargoyles with hands and feet no different than might adorn any common hobgoblin. Finally, in regard to the colorist whose "land of Oz" rainbow of lite-'n'-brite pastels is anything *but* frightening, I can only recommend that she might learn a thing or two from *Terminator: The Burning Earth*. (Monika Livingston, once again, is an obviously talented colorist, but badly out of place working on *Aliens*.)

One last observation... Even the grim world of *Aliens* has room for a certain type of humor, but goofy slapstick is most certainly *not* the type. Case in point: page 16 of issue #1 depicts an utterly blank-looking marine wandering away from the rest of his platoon. This downright silly panel is followed by a sequence in which he steps directly onto a thin "bridge" of metal stretched across a gaping hole in the floor. He drops in like a sack of potatoes (surprise, surprise), making no apparent attempt to break his fall on the way down. This already hilariously dopey event is made even funnier by the "kiddie komix" sound effects that accompany it. Somehow "CRUNCH" and "CRUMPH" fail to strike me as the sorts of noises that would emanate from the decaying structure of a massive alien derelict as it gives way under the weight of a fully grown beanwit.

I would have been howling with laughter if not for my disgust at such blasphemous desecration of the once dignified *Aliens*. However, I am not laughing, and I am upset enough to risk losing a chance at future employment with Dark Horse Comics to express my outrage, in the hope that these words may in some way help to discourage any future disasters of clashing styles.

Needless to say, I would simply be astonished if anyone actually had the guts to print this in the letters column, not that I would expect to see any kind of serious criticism in the pages of Bug Hunt (low blow, I know). [You got that right.] Nevertheless, for what it's worth, my sincerest admiration and respect to the editor who dares to publicly face a hostile viewpoint.

Jerry Cheadle
Stockton, CA

Color yourself astonished, Jerry. I've never been accused of not having enough guts (usually quite the opposite), and I think this letters column has proffered a representative sample of all our readers' views, both here and in past issues.

One reason I chose to print your letter is because it's well written; you argue your points clearly and without undue venom. Most of the so-called "critical" letters we receive are mere excuses for juveniles to vent their nascent knowledge of language they can't use at home.

*In any case, to respond to your criticism, I must point out that artistic style is a very individual thing, and not everyone agrees with you that Sam's particular style is inappropriate for this title — as witness several letters printed here. And while I'll admit that slapstick is certainly out of place in *Aliens*, I'm not sure it was anyone's intent to yuk it up in the scene you described. Subsequent issues have taken on more of the dark, brooding feel you seem to have been missing — wouldn't you agree?*

Dear Bug-Hunters,

Mark Nelson got it right in *Aliens* vol. I.

John Bolton is getting it right on the covers for *Aliens: Earth War*.

But Denis Beauvais blew it in *Aliens* vol. II, and Sam Kieth is blowing it in *Aliens: Earth War*.

I don't mean to sound nit-picky, but the Aliens in question are supposed to have six fingers. It's been that way since *Alien* came out in 1979. It just bothers me that every time I look at the covers to vol. II, I have to look at such blatant errors.

Other than this one minor fiasco, I wish to congratulate the entire staff on a job very well done. Keep up the great work.

Jereme Haley
Pittsburg, CA

You're absolutely right, Jereme — except it's four fingers and two opposable thumbs. Got that, guys?

Dear Diana,

You've got quite the winning team on *this* book! I love Sam Kieth's art. (Did I spell his

name right?) [Yup.] I read an amusing and informative interview with Mr. Kieth in *Comics Interview* recently. He appeared to be a likable, witty, and humble guy. [You mean the interview in which he laughed about ignoring his editors?/] And Monika Livingston's colors merge with Sam's "dark" style brilliantly. Her name is so familiar, but I can't place it. Was she involved with *Neil The Horse*? [Not that I know of — she did, however, color the *Moebius* story in *DH's Earth Day Special*.]

And that Verheiden fellow — he's pretty good, too. I hope Hollywood doesn't steal him away.

Now I'm going to *have* to find *something* to criticize or Mike and Randy won't believe this is truly from me.

Okay. On pages 10-16, everyone's mouth is closed. Even while talking. Over thirty mouths! There. Now you know it's me.

Charlie Harris
Tucson, AZ

P.S. Any thoughts about printing comics on recycled paper?

Actually, yes, Charlie. The problem is that our books are printed on a web press and, currently, only very expensive types of recycled paper have the tensile strength required for the web press. However, we are even now looking into printing with recycled paper on a sheet-fed press for our black-and-white books.

To Those Who Would Flirt With Nature:

I remember seeing *Aliens* #1 a while back, flipping through it, and dropping it when I realized it wasn't the movie itself. Months later, when I stole a peek at where that mini-series had gone, did I ever regret that decision! I picked up the second *Aliens* series and loved it intensely. When I watched the movie again, it seemed to me that the comic's been plumbing depths that the movie never dreamed of — suddenly the movie seemed so trite and simplistic by comparison.

Then I picked up issue #1 of *Earth War* — and to be honest, I was somewhat disappointed. The art was too different, the likenesses were hardly *like* the characters I'd gotten to know, and it was all flashback — a necessary move, perhaps, since we haven't seen Ripley in ages, but hardly the best narrative device for a compelling thriller, which is what *Aliens* should be.

I thus thank you for the second issue of *Earth War*, which definitely seems to be getting back on track. Indeed, with this mission to go fetch the Alien "momma," this story could turn out rather similar to the first series — or is the Alien from a *different* home planet than the one we saw then? Ripley's plan might work, but if the Aliens aren't heading back to their mother on

their home planet, what makes Ripley think it'll be any easier for them to find their mother on Earth? Guess I'll have to wait and see...

On the artistic level, I'm still not used to the current renditions of Hicks or Ripley, but Newt is done near-perfect. Mark Verheiden is also doing an excellent job developing her character.

Peter T. Chattaway
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Sam seems to be doing quite a job of developing her, too!

Dear Dark Horse,

Sam Kieth is doing a fantastic job on *Aliens: Earth War*. I've always liked his artwork, especially his inks on *Mage*, but when I heard he was pencilling and inking *Earth War*, I was a little wary. I thought Sam's art might just be a little too cartoony for the stylish, realistic look of the previous *Aliens* books.

I was wrong. Sam's art has just as much impact, style, and power as did Denis Beauvais' or Mark Nelson's work. The mood of fear and potential violence was set perfectly by his dark, brooding pencils. Far from cartoony, his pencils reminded me of Wally Wood's and Al Williamson's best '50s work. Sam was an excellent choice for this series. I look forward to his art on future *Aliens* series.

Turning to the story a minute, I absolutely love Mark Verheiden's writing. That being said, can we finally have a story where the Aliens get their butts trashed for good? Mark writes gut-wrenching stories about them, and I enjoy each issue more than the next. The problem is, Mark has made the Aliens into such despicable scum, I'd like to see the humans wipe them out of the universe. This sets up quite a paradox: I could read Mark Verheiden *Aliens* stories for the rest of my life, but on the other hand, I've come to like and care for Newt, Hicks, and Ripley (finally) more than the films ever led me to, and I'd like to see their pain end. I think it's time for these poor people to have some peace. Let the chest-bursters go bother somebody else for a while — like the Predators (yes, I'm loving that title, too).

Jerry Smith
Covington, KY

Then be sure to stick around next month for the conclusion of Aliens vs. Predator, featuring our very own Chris Warner as guest penciller! And yes, I know I promised everyone that I'd let you in on our next Aliens crew, but negotiations are still being finalized — so check out the letters page in AvP #4, too. By then, with luck, I'll have all the dirty details!

— Diana Schutz